

REFLECTIONS

June 1, 2008

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."

John 15:1-2

The Gardener

Unless one considers the raking of a golf course bunker as such, there are not many who would associate my life with gardening. But a recent fungus attack on our privacy hedge has changed that. I have found myself spraying fungicide with frequency, then with a small pair of clippers in hand, snipping away the diseased stems and leaves so new ones may grow.

While pruning the weak and dying leaves from the hundreds of strong ones on each plant, my mind often drifts toward other matters of life. I wonder about each leaf as I trim these once promising parts away from the vine that has given them life. I wonder how they feel as they fall softly to the earth, their life snipped away. I wonder if they have a sense peace as their life ends. And I wonder if the remaining leaves on the plant grieve as I have with the recent loss of friends like Bill, Michael, and Charlie.

Like my friends, these leaves had grown with such promise, and indeed had even helped the plants prosper for a time. But their jobs were done. So as their purpose ends, I trim them away—not to bring on death, but to make room for life.

Each of us is a part of God's great garden. Jesus is the vine and we are his branches. The leaves growing from the vine reveal its life. But there comes a point when our work is done and The Gardener trims us away. The pain of death is not diminished for we will still grieve the loss of our friends. But pruning does not bring on death. It makes room for life.

And so it is in the life of our privacy hedge. The leaves that once revealed life have served their purpose and are trimmed away. But pruning makes room for life—fresher and more abundant. Soon new buds will burst through; fresh stems will form, and new leaves will take their shape. The Gardener did not bring on death. He made room for life.

And in God's garden life is everlasting.

"You are the light of the world,"

Richard +

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